



Baby Milestones 13-18 Months: Best Sippy Cups

Choosing a sippy cup that won't interfere with your baby's speech development

By Mindy Berry Walker, *Babytalk*

Ah, sippy cups, how they keep life neat! At the same time, they shouldn't be the only cup you offer your toddler. To drink from one, a child's mouth has to be in the suckling position, with the tongue out and over the lip -- the same position used for bottle-feeding or nursing. "There are only a few sounds we produce with the tongue out, like 'th,' " says Jessie Cooper, a speech pathologist in Ardsley, NY. "Most words are spoken with the tongue in, and sippys don't encourage that." Although there's no proof that such cups cause speech delays, experts have noticed that some kids with delays often use them. Tell your doc about any speech concerns, and try this game plan to introduce cups and straws.

Open cup: Use a small, plastic one, fill it a third of the way, and give it to your (bibbed!) tot at meals.

Benefits: Encourages lip retraction -- when lips have to make a "smiley face" for words like "hi."

Straw sippy cup: They're mostly spillproof, so use them at home or in the car.

Benefits: Promotes funneling -- when the tongue stays in the mouth to talk -- and also strengthens cheek and lip muscles.

Sippy cup: Keep this one in your diaper bag, and use it for bedtime or when your tot is all dressed up.

Benefits: Saves your sanity!